

**A Narrative of the proceedings in
Parliament, and ~~other~~ Committees of Parlia-
ment, concerning the business between the
Clothiers; and the *Ingrossers* and Trans-
porters of *Wool* and *Fullers Earth*.**

Or the state of the Matter, how it now stands
between them.

IN the year 1646. the *Clothiers*, and other Woolen Manu-
facturers of this Nation, presented a Petition to the Parlia-
ment, signed with many thousand hands, which Petition
was delivered by the Lord Chief Justice *St. Johns*, and was
read and referred unto a Committee of twenty eight Members,
and all of the House that would come were to have voices *Baron*
Thorpe being appointed the Chair, which Committee constant-
ly for 13. or 14. months, did meet and hear the *Ingrossers* de-
fence for themselves, by their learned Councill, of which they
had many, and were freely heard: and the Committee sent or-
der into all Countreys, that all men that would, might come
and give in their exception against the *Clothiers* desires: and af-
ter they were heard, and the *Clothiers* defence which they made;
In two meetings the Committee concluded and drew up a Re-
port to make to the Parliament; upon which Report we wait-
ed very often at the House door, the space of a yeer and an
half; but they, by reason of their great and weighty affairs,
could not be at leisure to hear it.

We then hearing they had erected a Councill of State, and
had referred the business of the Trade of this Nation to them:
we conceiving it the next course to expedite our business, ap-
plied our selves thither by Petition, with our Reasons and a
Bill; which were read in the Councill, and upon consideration
had of it, they thought meet, that forasmuch as the Cause was
depending in Parliament, to return it back, and Ordered that

Sir *Will: Muffam* should make the Report to the Parliament, upon which we waited long, and had severall days appointed for hearing, but other business still hindred.

Then the Parliament set up a Councell for Trade, and we applyed our selves to them, with Bill and Reasons for our desires; which was heard by them, and those we complained of were called before them, and were heard many times. And the Councell of Trade at length did order them, to bring in, in writing, what they could say for themselves; and they brought in to the Councel, their Plea, for their right to their Trade. And then the *Clothiers* were ordered to bring in their Answer to it, which was likewise done, and it was read and considered of by the Councel, whereupon it was ordered that the Councel or any two of them, should meet and draw up what they thought fit to present to the Parliament, but their time of sitting suddenly expiring, nothing more was done by them.

Since that time we have applied our selves to the Councell of State, and they have received our Petition, with our Bill and Reasons; and upon consideration had of them, referred the further consideration of the whole matter to the Committee for Trade, and forraign affairs; from, and by whom we doubt not, but to have our desires expedited, and so prepared for the Parliament that they may speedily grant our Petition.

But one thing more we must add, that the Councel for Trade then sitting at *White Hall*; did send to the Committee for Trade in *London*, and ordered them to communicate to them, what usefulness they thought there was of any *Ingrosser* of Wooll in the Common-wealth, which answer of theirs, we do present to your view. And the *Ingrossers*, or *Staplers* defence, and the *Clothiers* answer to it. By reading of which, you may understand what it is we desire, what is said against us, and how the case stands.

By *Edmond Rozer* for the rest
of the *Clothiers*.

(3)

The Report of the Committee for 723 Trade London, to the Councell of Trade concerning the *Staplers*.

To the Honourable the Councell of Trade, appointed by
PARLIAMENT.

THe Committee for Trade appointed by common Councell of the City of *London*, in pursuance of the order of this Honorable Councell of the 11th. of this instant *June*, do humbly certifie; That upon a Petition of the Free men of this City Trading in Wooll, for redresse of manyfold abuses practised by the Society of *Staplers*; They had occasion to make some inquiry into the foundation and nature of the *Staple*, and the priviledges pretended unto by the Society; And did hear certain principall men of the *Staplers*; And perused the Acts and Records by them cited and produced, in defence of the same. And the opinion of this Committee thereupon was, and is, that albeit, the *Staplers* had once a legall being, yet that the same is now determined or expired, (at least as to the commodity of Wooll) in as much as the transportation of Wooll is now forbidden, for which only or chiefly, they were at first constituted a Society. Nor did, or doth this Committee conceive them at all necessary, but in many respects disadvantageous to the Common-wealth, as being (in their opinions) the principall cause.

1. Of the dearnes of Wooll, and consequently of Cloth, for they brogging and buying between the *Grower*, and *Clothier*, and ingrossing the greatest part of the Wooll, sell it not to the *Clothier* but at their own rates, or for a quick and better Market transport it into forraign parts.

2. Of the badnes of Cloth, for the *Stapler* buying Wooll of severall Countries, and sorts, (as Northorn and Western Pasture, and Fallow) sells the same to the *Clothier* mingled and compounded, who not discovering, nor able to single, or seperate again the different Wools, makes up a bad and ill conditioned Cloth, that mixed Wool not working and proving alike, in regard of the different qualities thereof, as is affirmed by Persons of skill and experience therein.

And 3ly. Of discouragement and distruction to clothing, and

to the Woollen Trade, for by the *Staplers* ingrossing, and deer selling, the *Clothier* is rendred unable to buy. By his transportation, cloth is made in *Holland*, and other parts of English Wooll, and is become cheaper there; then can be here made and transported thither, they being furnished with all hands necessary to the finishing thereof: And by the insufficient cloth made of mixed and different Wools, the Manufactures of England is much disparaged and lost in its esteem beyond the Seas. And from hence it follows that multitudes of people, who by making of cloth, and means of the woollen Trade, would be employed and maintained: are left without means of livelyhood: Workmen of our own country are inticed or forced beyond the Seas, to become teachers or Servants of strangers, in the Art of Clothing, (which till lately hath excelled in England only,) foreign commodities which were the exchange for Cloth, are now procured with much more difficulty and disadvantage to us. Many other like evils were obvious, and apparent to this Committee, when this busines was under their consideration, which they forbear to recollect, the Particulars they have mentioned, importing (as they conceive) sufficient reasons of their opinions: That the *Staplers* are unnecessary and disadvantageous to this Common-wealth. Dated June 26. 1651.

The Defence of the *Mayor, Con-* *Vera copia.*
stables and Society of the Merchants of the
 Staple of *England*.



O the Report of the Committee for Trade *Lon-*
don, concerning the disadvantage to this Com-
 mon wealth of continuing the said Society of
Staplers.

And first whereas the Opinion of that Com-
 mittee is, That albeit the *Staplers* had once a le-
 gall being, yet that the same is now determined, (at least as to
 the Commoditie of Wooll) inasmuch as the transportation of
 Wooll is now forbidden, for which onely or chiefly (as is alledg-
 ed in the said Report) they were at first constituted a Society.

For Answer thereunto, it appears by the severall Acts of Par- *Ann. 27*
 liament and Charters mentioned in the Margent, that they are *Ed. 3. cap*
 an ancient Society, incorporated in the Reign of *Edw: the 3d:* *1. 56. 8*
 and hath without intermission continued in possession ever since *16. 21. 22.*
 the first Election; Mr: Alderman *Kendrich* being present Mayor,
 and have many special priviledges and Authorities granted un-
 to them, and have had a constant allowed Trade in all times in
 buying and selling of Wools here in *England* and *Wales*; and
 have always been buyers of Wool as well as the *Clothiers* though
 not to ship forth.

And that from the first the *Staplers* were both Merchants and
 Artifts; As Merchants to buy and transport, and Artifts to sever,
 divide, and sort Wools: And such persons as were employed to
 winde and pack up Wools were sworn, and still are or ought by
 a Statute Law to be sworn, before the Mayor of the Staple, and
 the Charters of *Anno 3. Eliz:* and *Anno 15. Jacobi* cited in the
 Margent were chiefly Declarative of their former Priviledges;
 saving that where they were formerly incorporated by the
 name of the Merchants of the Staple of *Callice*, by these they are
 Incorporated by the name of the Mayor, Constables, and Socie-

Ann. 38.

Ed. 3. ca. 7.

And 27

Ed. 3. c. 23.

3 S May: 3.

Eliz:

29 March

15 Jac: 6.

17 Ed. 3.

c. 1.

tie of the Merchants of the Staple of *England*, and the Charter of the 15. *Jacobi*.

1. Recites the Charter of the 3d: *Eliz*:

2ly, It shews that its found to be a damage to transport Wools beyond the Seas.

3ly, It revokes the Staple thence, and Declares, That the Staple of Wools and Woolfels shall be held and kept within this Land in the Cities and places under-named, and not elsewhere, viz: In *London* and Suburbs, *Canterbury*, *Excceter*, *Norwich*, *Worcester*, *Lincoln*, *Winchester*, *Shrewsbury*, *Oswestry*, *Northampton*, *Brackley*, *Reading*, *Cisister*, *Kendal*, *Sherborn*, *Devises*, *Tanton-Dean*, *Ratesdale*, *Richmond*, *Wakefield*, *Hallifax*, *Cogshall*, and *Woodstock*.

In all twenty three; And long before this Grant ever since 27. *Edw*: 3d: speciall Towns were by a Statute appointed here in *England*, where the Staple of Wooll and Woolfels were perpetually to be held and kept.

4. It grants and confirms to the said Society full liberty in *England* and *Wales* to buy Wools of any Subject, though not for provision of the Staple, or to ship for *Callice*, and at all times, and on all days (except Sundays) and to buy at *London*, &c. all, and all manner of Wools whatsoever, the Statutes of 14 *Edw*: 3. and 5. *Edw*: 6. or other Statutes notwithstanding.

5. That they enjoy all Priviledges granted by *Qu: Elizabeth*, or any other, or by any Statutes or Acts as amply as when Wool and Woolfels were transported.

6. To use this Priviledge at *Leaden Hall*, or elsewhere as they please. Provided that this Grant shall not extend to hinder any *Clothier* that manufactured Wooll, but that they and their Factors and Servants may buy Wooll to convert to their uses.

Nota.

1. That the *Clothier* is no way restrained to buy from the *Grower*, but saved by this proviso.

2. Whereas the opinion of that Committee is, that the *Staplers* are not at all necessarie, but in many respects disadvantageous to the Common wealth, as being (in their opinions) the principall cause of the dearness of Wooll, and consequently of Cloth.

2. Of the badness of Cloth, by mingling and compounding Wools of severall Countreys and sorts.

3. Of the Discouragement and destruction to Clothing, and of the Woollen Trade.

For

For Answer thereunto, the *Staplers* are very confident it will plainly appear by the ensuing Arguments, That they are very necessarie Members of the Common-wealth, and that many benefits do thereunto accrew by them, and that they neither occasion the dearness of the Wool, and so consequently of the Cloth, nor are destructive to Clothing.

First, the Wools of most part of this Nation being of a mixt nature long and short together; the long is only fit for the *Combers*, who make Stuffs, Stockings, &c. and the short for the *Clothiers* who make Cloth, and as it grows long and short together, it is neither fit for *Clothiers* nor *Combers* unlesse it be first divided. The *Staplers* takes off from the *Growers* the parcels both long and short, and divide the long fleeces from the short, and in the fleece the long Wooll from the short, and so usually furnish both the *Clothier* and the *Comber* with what is proper for either in the Fleece, if they desire it, which is a conveniency that commonly they cannot have from the *Grower*, who will generally sell his whole parcell together.

Secondly, whereas in the long Fleeces there is short Wooll, and in the short Fleeces long Wooll, and in both long and short Fleeces there are many sorts courser and finer; It is, and hath been the *Staplers* Art to break the Fleeces into severall parts, and to sort the long from the short; and not onely so, but they do sort and divide the long Wooll into three or four sorts, and the short Wooll into four or five sorts, and so the *Clothiers* and *Combers* do usually buy from the *Staplers* any sort of Wooll from 3 d: or 4 d: the pound to 16 d: or 20 d: the pound, according to the severall sorts of Cloth, and other manufacture which they make. And from time to time the *Staplers* have (according to the Priviledges granted them) taken, and do take Apprentises, and Journeymen are employed in that part of the Mystery of the *Stapler* in the dividing and sorting of Wools, to the great ease and advantage of all Manufacturers of Wooll.

Thirdly, that the *Staplers* thus sorting their Wools are usefull to *Clothiers*, both to the wealthiest sort of *Clothiers*, and to the meaner sort: for although the wealthier sort may have great quantities of Wooll upon their hands, yet oftentimes they do want some particular sorts of Wooll, and do buy them of the *Stapler*, although they have good store of other Wooll of their

own. So that if the rich *Clothier* must make use of the *Stapler*, much more are the *Staplers* convenient for the middle & meaner sort of *Clothiers*, who are able to lay out no more money then for the very sort of Wooll which they are to use.

Fourthly, That there are divers places in this Commonwealth, as in *Yorkshire* and elsewhere, where there dwell many *Clothiers* that make onely course Cloth, Ruggs, course Cottons, and Flannels, and use onely course sort of Wools, and buy those sorts of Wooll of the *Stapler* ready sorted, whereas they will be to seek in their trading if they be put to buy all their Wooll of the *Grower*, where they cannot have what is for their turn, but must buy both course and fine, which their stock of money will not reach unto.

Fifthly, There are divers *Combers* as at *Norwich*, and in *Essex*, *Suffolk*, &c. who use great quantities of long course Wooll, which sorts they usually buy of the *Stapler* readie sorted. Whereas if such *Combers* must buy their Wool of the *Grower* in the Countrey in the Fleece, they must buy seven, eight, or ten packs of fleece Wooll to make one pack of such course Wooll; So it will appear that they may be as well fitted for such sorts by laying out 20 li. with the *Stapler*, as they can by laying out 100 li. or 150 li. with the *Grower*.

Sixthly, Whereas there are divers places in the Commonwealth, as *Exceter*, *Taunton*, and elsewhere, where very great quantities of long Wooll is used for Stuffs, Stockings, &c. and no considerable quantitie grows nearer then *Buckinghamshire*, *Northamptonshire*, *Leicestershire*, which are an hundred miles or more distant from them. It cannot be but very prejudicial to them of those parts, if every Stuffle maker and Stocking-maker must go an hundred miles or upwards in the Countrey to buy every pack of Wool he spends, unless there be a third party as the *Stapler* betwixt the *Grower* and them to supply them. And in a famous City in the West where there are very many *Combers*, yet are few of them able to disburse so much money at once as will pay for two packs of Wool.

Exceter.

Seventhly, That the *Clothiers* and *Combers* who make Stuffs, Stockings, &c. come from all parts to *London* to sell their Cloth, Stuffs, and other Manufactures, usually come to the *Staplers* and have Wool of them fit for their uses, whereby their Trade is driven

driven to their very great advantage; and when they cannot sell their Commodities have Wooll of the *Stapler* often times upon credit, which the *Clothier* will not all times finde convenient for him to do, nor can he as having no Stock left then to defray his constant expences.

Eightly, The *Clothiers* and *Combers* do frequently buy Wooll of the *Staplers* even at *Shier*-time, when there is plenty of Wools in all Countreys; which they would not do if they did not finde a conveniency in it: for it is to be observed that the *Clothier* and Manufacturer of Wooll was never restrained from buying of Wooll when, where, and as often as he pleaseth, or could have at any time occasion for any.

And as the *Staplers* are (as is before declared) necessary & beneficial to the Commonwealth in respect of the worker of Wools; so likewise he is in respect of the *Grower*, for that if the *Stapler* should be restrained from buying of Wooll, and use of his Trade, many Inconveniencies and mischiefs would thereby insue to the *Growers*, and so consequently to the Commonwealth, whereof they are a considerable part, & amongst others these following.

It will be mischievous to the Wooll *Growers* who have great parcels of Wooll if the *Stapler* be restrained, because such *Growers* will be bound by Authority to sell to the *Clothiers* in particular, and none else but the richest sort of *Clothiers*; the meaner sort not being able to compass them, who will either make them sell their Wooll as they list, or keep it on their hands. And its well known that divers *Growers* have been forced to keep their Wooll three, foure, or five yeers upon their hands though it lay very neer the *Clothiers*, and have been faine to sell it at the last to the *Staplers*.

Vide the
Certifi-
cates and
Pet: of the
severall
Counties.

2. It will be very prejudicial to such *Growers* as live in remote parts of the Land far distant from *Clothiers*, because the Wooll will lye on the *Growers* hands, which will soon be if the *Clothier* be the onely buyer.

3. Great damage will also hereby ensue to all *Growers* which are accustomed or necessitated to sell their Wools at *shier*-time for moneys to get in their harvest, who are a very considerable number throughout the Land; Because if the *Clothiers* be the sole buyers, they will buy at leisure, and at what price they please.

4. Much

4. Much losse will be to such *Growers* as have their Wools of a mixt nature, long and short together, as in *Essex, Kent, Berks, Warwick, Lyncolne*, and most Counties in *England* if the *Staplers* be restrained, because the short Wooll is only fit for the *Clothier*, and the long for the *Comber*, and the whole parcell together is fit for neither except it be divided. The *Staplers* take off from the *Growers* the whole parcel, being long and short. Whereas otherwise the *Grower* must take two *Chapmen* for one, and the same parcell, or keep his Wool in his hands.

5. It will be a great detriment to all *Growers* if none but *Clothiers* shall buy Wooll, (who far exceed *Clothiers* in number) if their Wools be not taken off in convenient time, for thereby the *Tenants* will be disabled to pay their rents, and *Growers* be destitute of monies, if the *Clothiers* be the only buyers.

6. It will be a great damage to all *Growers* if none but *Clothiers* shall buy Wooll, because *Growers* must sell their Wool within a year, and so must be inforced to take what price Wool is then at, or that the *Clothier* will give him, or else incurr the penalty of the Statute, which gives 10. s: upon a Todd forfeiture if the *Grower* keep it above a year, being offered the general price VVool is then at.

7. Whereas by the statute of the 5. and 6. *Edw. 6. Chap: 7.* none were to buy Wooll but the *Clothier* and the *Stapler*, the *Brogger* and *Jobber* being restrained upon complaints of the *Growers*, that their Wools were not taken off their hands, although both *Clothiers* and *Staplers* were buyers, thereupon the statute of *Jacobi 21.* that Law of the 5th: and 6 *Edw. 6.* was repealed, and so it was left free for all men to buy Wooll: So that if it were thought an inconvenience to the *Growers*, and so consequently to the *Common-wealth*, when buying off Wooll was in the hands of both the *Clothier* and *Stapler*, what will it be if it be left to the *Clothier* only.

8. Whereas it is intimated by the *Clothiers* that they do use all the Wooll of this Land, and do pretend they will give the *Grower* as good a price as when buying of Wooll is at generall Liberty, and so that what they desire in being the only buyers, shall be rather for the benefit, then losse of the Wool *Growers*.

For answer to this, true it is, the *Clothiers* and other *Manufactures* use all the Wooll for the several *Manufactures*, but they use

use it at their own leisure, and their leisure will not agree with the occasions of the *Wooll Growers*: And whatever they may pretend for giving the *Growers* as good a price for *Wooll*, constant experience and common reason teacheth, that if the *Clothiers* be the sole buyers, they will take off *Wooll* from the *Grower* at what time they please, and at what price as is before expressed.

And whereas it is alledged in the said Report, that the *Staplers* are a principal cause of the deernes of *Wooll*, and consequently of *Cloth*, by brogging and buying between the *Grower*, and *Clothier*, and by ingrossing the greatest part of the *Wooll*, and selling it to the *Clothier* at their own rates, or transport it into forraign parts.

For answer, they say that the free men of the society of the *Staplers*, are not the 50th part of the buyers of *Wooll*, the *Clothiers*, *Broggers*, and *Jobbers*, considered, and so consequently the freemen of the society of *Staplers*, cannot inhance the price of *Wools*, nor be the ingrossers of the greatest part thereof, as is declared in the said Report, neither are they Ingrossers at all, for the Merchant of the *Staple* doth buy, and sort, divide, and fit all sorts of *Wooll* to all sorts of Manufactures, & doth sell the same at all times all the year, be *Wooll* cheap or deer. It being his Trade to buy and sell, and sort *Wooll*, and he so doing cannot be said to be an ingrosser, it may be as well applied to a *Draper*, *Cheesemonger*, *Silkman*, or *Goldsmith*, who must have more *Cloth*, *Plate*, *Silke*, *Butter*, and *Cheese*, then for his own expence, and may by Law buy as much, and as great quantities as his stock, and credit will extend unto, & yet no Ingrosser. And many of the *Clothiers* themselves do practice that which they complain of against the *Staplers*, for many *Clothiers* do forestall and ingrosse *Wool*, only to sell it again, and do sell again what they might use. And as for the charge laid against them touching transportation of *Wools*; They utterly deny that they do transport any, and do desire that the strictest Law that can be devised maybe made against it. And whereas it is alleadged in the said Report, that the *Staplers* do mingle and compound the *Wools* of severall Counties and sorts together, and so consequently are a principall cause of the badnes of *Cloth*, and of all the evils thereby arising.

For answer thereunto, the *Staplers* do affirm that they do not mingle

minge or compound the Wools, but do divide and sort it as is before declared, and doth cleanse it from filth, and Trath, and cut off the Brandmarks, some one of them having in one year lost 100 markes in mony, by Brandmarkes of Pitch. &c. Besides the *Clothier* buyes of the *Stapler* his Wool open, and cannot be deceived.

Moreover, the *Clothier* buying of his Wool of the *Stapler* open, prevents the deceits of the *Winder*, so if that there be any mingling of pasture and fallow, it is in the *Grower* when he puts up his Wooll, and if there be any mingling or compounding of the Wooll of one County with another, it is the *Clothiers* own act after they have bought their Wools, neither doth the major part of the *Clothiers* buy their Wooll of the *Stapler*.

By all which it is very apparent, That the Free-men of the Society of *Staplers* are not destructive to Clothing and the Woollen Trade, nor causers in the least measure of any of those evil effects mentioned in the said Report; but are necessary and very usefull, and beneficial Members in the Common-wealth; and have been a necessarie partie continued both in relation to the Wooll *Growers*, and *Clothiers*; and have a legal right to the Trade they use: they having been brought up in the said Act, and it being the onely livelihood of them and their families.

And therefore they humbly pray, They may enjoy their Trade so confirmed unto them by Acts of Parliament, and Charters as is before declared.

But if it shall be objected that the *Clothiers* (as they do pretend) can and do make out in Cloth all the Wooll that they buy whether long or short, and so can take off all Wooll from the *Grower* without the *Stapler*.

1. For Answer: first, it is a known thing that long Wooll and course Wooll to *Staplers* or *Combers*, and the *Combers* they sell away their sort of Wooll to the *Staplers* and *Clothiers*.

And if a *Clothier* buy long and short together, he must lay out his Stock unnecessarily for a great part.

2. If the *Clothier* use all Wools in Cloth, they sell a very great part of it; for long Wool is worth 12.d: a li. to the *Comber* which is not worth 8d. per pound to the *Clothier*; And short Wooll is not useful at all to the *Comber*, is onely proper for the *Clothier*.

Secondly,

Secondly, if it shall be objected that the *Clothiers* can sort their Wools themselves, and so need no *Stapler* to sort their Wools for them.

For answer, though the *Clothier* can sort Wooll fit for their own uses, yet they neither can, nor do for other mens uses, which appears by this reason, for that all the sorts of Wool which the *Clothier* sells to *Staplers*, are faine to sort them over again, before they can sell them to be usefull for any Body.

3. If it shall be objected, That if the *Stapler* be of so much use and advantage to the *Clothier* & *Manufacturer* of Wooll as is before in many particulars expressed, how is it that the *Clothier* now labours totally to suppress and extirpate the Merchant of the *Staple*.

The short and true answer is, the *Clothier* seeks only his private profit, which far exceeds his use and benefit by the *Stapler*, and he hath already swallowed down (in his own conceit) and even digested a Monopoly, for grant what he asks, and a few years will make him rich, and the Commow-wealth poor.

And it is to be observed, that the *Clothiers* for the better obtaining their end offole buying all the Wools of this Nation, do cunningly intermix the *Staplers* with the *Broggers* and *Jobbers*, under the common title of *Ingrossers*. Whereas the *Staplers* as hath been before declared, are an antient Society, and have been alwayes buyers of Wooll as well as the *Clothier*, and the *Broggers* and *Jobbers* are interloppers in the buying and selling of Wooll, being *Inkeepers*, *Taylers*, *Glovers*, &c. and are increased and grown extraordinary numerous since the 21 year of King *James* and more especially of late years.

2. The *Clothiers* would put down the *Staplers*, and take away their very possession so wel established, and continually used, and confirmed by Parliament, and otherwise as is formerly shewed, and would set themselves up in their Trade; for a *Clothier* under colour of making some cloth, may buy what Wool he please, and sell it again. And so the *Clothier* will use and ingrosse the *Staplers* Trade, as well as their own Trade of clothing.

All which the inconveniencies aforesaid will occur, and many more which at present upon so great an innovation cannot possibly be foreseen, or prevented.

Signed by order of the *Mayor, Constables, and Society of the Merchants of the Staple of England.*

By *Edward Taylor* Clerk to the said Society.

Ex: *Samuel Hartlib.* Clerk.

The Reply of *Clothiers* to the *Staplers* Plea.

Wherein they would seem to be beneficiall to the Clothiers, and the Common-wealth of England.

First, they say there are long and short fleeces of Wool, (and in the severall fleeces long and short Wool) which the *Clothiers* of the old and new Drapery, cannot use in their severall Manufactures so well for their profit in the fleece, as if they bought it sorted: which is the sum of their first, second, and third Reasons, for their usefulness to the *Clothiers*, and indeed it is the strength of all their Reasons for themselves, wherein they pretend their usefulness for the good of the Common-wealth.

Ans^w: The *Clothiers* grant there are long and short fleeces of Wool, (or Wool which consisteth of long and short fleeces) so there are *Clothiers* of the old and new Drapery, that use short and long fleeces, and they fit their Wool for their use, the one buyes such sort of fleeces as is fit for his use, as long fleeces, and the other for his use as short fleeces for Cloath-making, so both buying what is fit for each man they buy all, we know of no more then short and long fleeces, so that there need no third party, or any Ingrosser to help them in their Trade.

2. *Ans^w:* If there be long and short Wool in a fleece, (as there is without question) the severall Manufacturers can use it all, for they make severall sorts of Cloath, and stufes, some fine, and some courser, in which they spend and use all the Wooll they buy in the fleece, both in the old and new Drapery.

Secondly

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*Secondly, They plead their usefulness of sorting Wool fit for,
the Clothiers.*

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To that the *Clothiers* answer, that the makers of Cloath of the old and new Drapery are to be judged the most fit men, to sort their Wool themselves, for their several sorts of cloth which they make of it: And not to be sorted by an Ingrosser which knows not what belongs to Wool, but only informes himself by the Market how it goes with the *Clothier*, and never buys but when he knows the *Clothier* must use it. And further, the ingrossing *Stapler* sells a great part of the Wool he buyes againe, in the fleeces unsorted; and therefore he buyes it not to sort it fit for the *Clothiers* use.

2. The *Staplers* sorting of Wool, which is the only Plea they have, for being usefull to the Common-wealth (and the *Clothiers*) is the greatest mischief they can do them, for in their sorting of Wool, they use more deceit then in the fleece, and mix several Countries Wools together, which we cannot so well discern as in the fleece, and several Countries Wools have their several operations in working, and therefore we allow for each Countries Wool, according to the nature of it to make good Cloth, which we cannot do when we buy it sorted, so that their sorting is worse to us, then their selling in the fleece, for that Wool we are constrained to buy of them sorted, we must sort it over again before we can use it.

They pretend they help both poor and rich Clothiers.

To that we answer, they are extreemly prejudiciall, both to poor and rich *Clothiers*.

1. For the rich *Clothiers* can go to the *Growers* and buy their Wool of them, as well as the *Staplers*, and give them as good a price, either for money or time, as the Ingrosser can do: And if the *Clothier* buyes any Wool of the sorter for his necessity, it is because he is forestalled, and cannot have it at the Market.

2. For the poor *Clothiers* how many of them have the *Staplers* undone, by selling them dear and bad commoditie, they groaning under such a yoke as they are hardly ever able to get out of it, for the poor *Clothier* had better be a Journeyman, to him that

buyes his Wool of the *Grower*, then Trade for himself by buying of the pretended sorters of Wool; And we can hardly beleve the *Stapling Ingrosser* is so full of goodnes or charity, to use his Trade for the good either of rich or poor *Clothier*.

But their speciall pretence is, they are beneficiall to the Growers.

We *Answ*: We conceive no particular mans benefit (or yet a few mens interest) is to be valued more, then the generality of the Nations good.

For the Growers are not benefited by the Staplers in the Generality.

1. The *Staplers* forestalling the Market, hinder the *Clothiers* from coming there, because the *Staplers* know when the *Clothiers* (have a quick Market) and must use their Wool, and then the *Staplers* get before them, and bid them prizes for very great quantities of Wool, and give earnest for some. And when the *Clothiers* come, the *Growers* tell them they are bid so much by one, that will sell it again to them, then the *Clothiers* must give more, or else go home again without Wooll (which they often do) and then the *Ingrossers* will not have it but at their own prizes, so the *Growers* are preid upon by the *Staplers*, and how beneficiall to the Common-wealths good these people are, let the world judg.

2. The poorer sort of *Growers*, that are constrained to sell their Wool at quarter day, or for present money to serve their occasions; the rich *Clothiers* continually provide mony for them: But the *Ingrossers* will be sure to lay hold of these sorts of *Growers*, before their Wool be shorne, and do by them, as they do by the poor *Clothiers*, or as the Bramble doth by the sheep.

3. As for the richer sort of *Growers*, they will have their prizes, or keep their Wool till they can have it, and neither *Stapler* or *Clothier* can buy but at their price. The *Stapler* never buyes any parcel of Wool till he knows he can sell it again to the *Clothier*, (or to transport it) so the *Grower* gains not by him.

4. The

4. The *Staplers* pretend, the *Growers* are by statute Law constrained to sell their Wool within twelve moneths after it is shorne. 727

We Answ: we know of no such statute, nor do we desire it should be so, though the *Staplers* may seem to use it for their own profit.

Yet further.

They alleadge that the reason of the repeal of the Statute of the 5. and 6. *Edw: 6. Cap: 7.* by the Statute 21. *Jacob: was* upon complaint of the *Growers*, because they could not sell their Wools, the *Ingrossers* being restrained.

The *Clothiers* Answer, they can hardly beleve this, for they desire to know why the *Staplers* desire the suppressing of all other *Ingrossers*: and themselves to be the sole, or only *Ingrossers*, to give the truest reason (as we conceive) of the repeal of that Statute, was, that the Parliament perceiving there was a project propounded, under pretence of Law, to have given a dispensation to the *Staplers*, whereby to make the King the sole Merchant of Wools, to prevent that mischief the Statute was repealed. And the Statute of 5. and 6. *Ed: 6.* gives the Reason clearly, that the plenty of Wool, ought to cause the commodities of Wools to be made cheap, so that the Merchants might thrive in their Trades, and the poor at home be maintained.

Yet: They alleadge they are not the fiftieth part of the buyers of Wooll in this Nation.

We answer, that one ingrossing *Stapler*, doth buy as much Wool as fifty *Clothiers* use. And by that Argument a few of them may do mischief enough; And whereas they call themselves free-men of the Staple, if it be inquired into, it will be easily found, that very few of them do use the Trade of buying and selling of Wooll, for many of them are Merchants, and Drapers, (and their now Mayor is a Merchant) and what can they do but ingrosse and joyn their money for that purpose: for the *Ingrossing Staplers* in regard of their Corporation, are the better inabled to ingrosse the greatest part of the Wooll of this Nation, for they can agree together in a joyn stock.

Again,

[14]
*Again, they alleadg that some Clothiers are Ingrossers
 themselves.*

We answer, it is true, and many more will practise the same evill, if ingrossing and Ingrossers be not suppressed; And they are constrained to do it because they cannot live of their Trade, (by reason of so many *Ingrossers*) and we all desire to have all *Ingrossers* put down, and that none might buy Wooll, but those that make it into Manufactures, and likewise buy no more then they use.

Further, they pretend the Clothiers would make a Monopoly of it.

To that we answer, how its like that so many thousands of Manufacturers, living so far asunder, over the whole Nation, of severall Arts and Miteries, and buy only for their own use, how this can be a Menopoly we know not, if there be or may be a Monopoly, its likeli to be the *Staplers*, because they combine, and joyn their stocks together.

Yet still they are offended, that Staplers, Ingrossers, Jobbers, and Broggers should be put together in one rank.

Answ: We meddle not with them as they are Merchants of the Staple, or a Corporation, but as they do practise the same evill with their Brethren the *Broggers*, and *Jobbers*: and take notice, the *Staplers* would have them suppressed, as evill Members of the Common wealth. These Gentlemen would commit the transgression, and yet would not be numbred amongst the transgressors: if they be joyned in practise, we cannot sever them in title: for if the *Stapler* loose his possession, which he sayes is his livelyhood: If his living be by doing hurt, he had better (without question) loose it then keep it, and take up some better course of life.

They yet go on further, alleadging that many Countreys and Cities have no wooll neer them, therefore they are necessarie.

1. We answer, that no City or Countrie desires one ingrossing

grossing *Stapler*, which they would willingly do if they were usefull for them.

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2. The severall Manufacturers in their Countries, go often a hundred miles to buy their Wooll of the *Growers*, and formerly the *Growers* brought their Wools to the Market. We farther answer, that many *Clothiers* have not the tenth part of their Wooll growing in their County, but most go 40. 50. or a 100. miles to buy their Wools, as *Devon: Suffolke, Essex,* and others, and when they have brought their Wooll home, they carry their Cloth to market, a hundred miles and more from the place where they dwell.

Our Conclusion is thus.

1. The woollen Manufacturers do buy and spend all the Wool of *England*, and more, witnes *Spanish*, and *Irish* Wools, by which means the *Grower* may sell all unlimited, to price or time.

2. The woollen Manufacturers can and do use all the severall sorts of Wooll, be it long or short fleeces, (or long & short Wool) into the severall sorts of their commodities which they make of it.

3. We can divide and sort our Wools our selves, for our severall uses, better then any *Ingrosser, Jobber, Brogger, or Stapler* can do.

Lastly, We are inabled better to imploy the poor, which likewise spend that money they receive, to the benefit of the Farmer for *Corn, Butter, Cheese, &c:* to pay his Rent at Quarter Day.

we humbly present these our Requests to your grave Considerations.

